

L E T T E R CXLVIII.

The Chevalier DANCENY to the Marchioness de MERTEUIL.

O YOU, whom I love! O thou, whom I adore! O you, with whom my happiness hath commenced! O thou, who hast completed it! Compassionate friend! tender mistress! why does the reflection that you are a prey to grief come to disturb my charmed mind? Ah, Madam! resume your calmness; it is the duty of friendship to make this entreaty. O my heart's only object! be happy; it is the prayer of love.

What reproaches have you to make to yourself? Believe me, your extraordinary delicacy misleads you. The regret it occasions you, the injuries it

charges me with, are equally imaginary ; and I feel within my heart, that there has been between us no other seducer than love. No longer dread, then, to yield to those sentiments you inspire, or to partake of a flame you have kindled. What ! would we have had more reason to boast of purity in our connection, if it had taken more time to form ? Undoubtedly not. That is the characteristic of seduction, which, never acting unless by projects, is able to regulate its progress and means, and foresees events at a great distance : but true love does not permit that kind of meditation and reflection ; it diverts us from thought with occupying us wholly with sentiments. Its empire is never more powerful than when unknown ; and it is in obscurity and silence that it steals upon us, and binds us in chains equally impossible to be perceived or to be broken.

Thus,

Thus, even yesterday, notwithstanding the lively emotions which the idea of your return caused in me, in defiance of the extreme pleasure I felt on seeing you, I nevertheless thought myself led and called upon by serene friendship alone, or rather intirely absorbed by the sweet sentiments of my heart, I concerned myself very little in tracing either their cause or origin. Like me, my dear friend, you experienced; though unconscious of it, that all-powerful charm, which gave up our whole souls to the rapturous impression of tenderness, and neither of us recognised it to be love, till after the intoxication that deity plunged us into.

But that very circumstance is our exculpation, instead of our guilt. No, you did not betray the rights of friendship, nor have I abused your confidence. We both, it is true, were ignorant of our sentiments; but we
only

only underwent the delusion, without any efforts to give birth to it: and far from complaining of it, let us only think of the happiness it procured us, without disturbing it by unjust reproaches; let our only endeavours be to farther augment it, by the pleasures of confidence and intire security. O, my friend! how dear these hopes are to my heart! Yes, henceforward freed from all fears, and wholly occupied by love, you will participate of my desires, of my transports, of the sweet delirium of my senses, of the intoxication of my soul, and each moment of our happy days shall be marked by a new enjoyment.

Adieu, thou whom I adore! I shall see thee this evening: but shall I find you alone? I hardly dare to hope it. Ah! you do not desire it as much as I!

Paris, Dec. 1, 17—.

L E T-

L E T T E R CXLIX.

*Madame de VOLANGES to Madame
de ROSEMONDE.*

I Was in hopes almost all day yesterday, to have been able to give you, my worthy friend, this morning, a more favourable account of our dear patient; but since last night, that hope is utterly destroyed. A matter seemingly of very little importance, but which, in its consequences, proves to be a very unhappy one, has made the case at least as grievous as before, if not worse.

I should not have had any comprehension of this sudden change, if I had not received yesterday the entire confidence of our unhappy friend.

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As she did not conceal from me that you also are acquainted with all her misfortunes, I can inform you every thing without reserve of her unhappy situation.

Yesterday morning, on my arrival at the convent, I was informed she had been asleep about three hours; and that sleep, so profound and so easy, I for some time was apprehensive was lethargic — Some time after she awoke, and opened the curtains of the bed herself.

At first she looked at us all with great surprise, and as I rose to go to her, she knew me, called me by my name, and begged I would come near her. She did not give me time to ask her any questions, but desired to know where she was; what we were doing there; if she was sick; and why she was not in her own house? I imagined at first, it was another phrenzy, only
more

more gentle than the former: but I soon perceived she understood my replies perfectly; and she had recovered her reason, but not her memory.

She questioned me very minutely on every thing that happened to her since she came to the convent, which she did not remember. I gave her a faithful account, only concealing what I thought might frighten her too much; and when I asked how she was, she replied she did not then feel any pain: but was much tormented during her sleep, and found herself fatigued. I advised her to keep quiet, and say little: then I partly closed the curtains, and sat down by the side of her bed: some broth was then proposed, which she agreed to take, and liked it very well.

She continued thus about half an hour, and only spoke to thank me for my care of her, which she did with that graceful ease you know is so natural

natural to her; afterwards she was for some time quite silent, which she broke at length, saying, “O yes, I now
“remember my coming here;” and a minute after, exclaimed grievously,
“My dear friend, have pity on me!
“My miseries are all returning on
“me.” I was then coming towards her, she grasped my hand, and leaning her head against it, “Great God!” said she, “cannot I then die!” Her expression more than her words melted me into tears; she perceived it by my voice, and said, “you pity me then; ah, if you but knew!”—Then breaking off: “Let us be alone, and I will tell you all.”

I believe I already wrote to you I had some suspicions, which I was apprehensive would be the topic of this conversation that I foresaw would be tedious and melancholy, and might probably be very detrimental to the present state of our unhappy friend.

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I endeavoured to dissuade her from it, by urging the necessity of repose; she however, insisted, and I was obliged to acquiesce.

As soon as we were alone, she acquainted me with every thing you already know, therefore unnecessary to be repeated.

At last, relating the cruel manner in which she was sacrificed, she added, “ I was very certain it would be my death, and I was resolved—but it is impossible to survive my shame and grief.” I attempted to contend against this depression, or rather despair, with motives of a religious nature, always hitherto so powerful in her mind; but I was soon convinced I was not equal to this solemn function, and I determined to propose calling in Father Anselmus, in whom I knew she reposes great confidence. She consented, and even appeared much to desire it—He was sent for, and came
imme-

immediately: he staid a long time with her, and said, going away, if the physicians were of the same opinion he was, the ceremony of the sacraments he thought might be postponed until the day following.

This was about three in the afternoon, and our friend was pretty quiet until five, so that we all began to conceive some hope; but unfortunately a letter was then brought for her; when it was offered to her, she replied at first she would not receive any, and no one pressed it; but from that time she seemed more disturbed. Soon after she asked from whom the letter came?—It had no post-mark — Who brought it?—No one knew — From what place did the messenger say it came? — The portress was not informed. She remained silent some time after; then again began to speak; but her discourse was so incoherent, we were soon

soon convinced the phrenzy was returned.

However there was a quiet interval afterwards, until at last she desired the letter should be given to her. The moment she cast her eyes on it, she exclaimed, "Good God! from him!" and then in a strong and oppressed tone of voice, "Take it, take it." She instantly ordered the curtains of her bed to be closed, and desired no one should come near her; but we were all soon obliged to come round her: the phrenzy returned with more violence than ever, accompanied with most dreadful convulsions — Those shocking incidents continued the whole evening; and the account I received this morning, informs me, the night has been no less turbulent. On the whole, I am astonished she has held out so long in the condition she is: and I will not conceal from you,

you, that I have very little, if any, hope of her recovery.

I suppose this unfortunate letter is from M. de Valmont—What! can he still dare to write to her! Forgive me, my dear friend; I must put a stop to my reflections—It is, however, a most cruel case, to see a woman make so wretched an end, who has, until now, lived so happy, and was so worthy being so.

Paris, Dec. 2, 17.—

LET.

L E T T E R CL.

*Chevalier DANCENY to the Marchioness
de MERTEUIL.*

I N expectation of the happiness of seeing you, I indulge myself, my tender friend, in the pleasure of writing to you; and thus by occupying myself with you, I dispel the gloom that otherwise would be occasioned by your absence. To delineate to you my sentiments, to recal yours to my mind, is a true enjoyment to my heart; and thus even the time of privation affords me a thousand ideas precious to my love — Yet, if I am to believe you, I shall not obtain any answer from you, even this letter shall be the last, and we shall abandon a correspondence which, according to
I ~~shall~~ you,

you, is dangerous, *and of which we have no need*—Certainly I shall believe you if you persist; for what can you desire that does not of course become my desire? But before you ultimately decide upon it, will you not permit a slight conversation on the subject.

Of the head of danger you are the only judge—I can frame no calculation of it—and I shall confine myself to requesting you would look to your own safety, for I can have no tranquillity while you are disquieted—As to this object, it is not we two that are but one, it is thou that art us both.

As to the matter of necessity, we can have but one thought; and if we differ in opinion, it can only rise from a want of proper explanation, or from not understanding one another. I shall therefore state to you what I think is my sensation.

Without doubt a letter appears very unnecessary when we can see one another

ther freely — What could it say that a word, or look, or even silence itself, could not express? A hundred times before, this appeared to me so clear, that in the very moment that you spoke to me of not writing any more, that idea my mind immediately adopted — It was a restraint upon it perhaps, but did not affect it — Thus, when I have offered a kiss upon your bosom, and found a ribband or piece of gauze in my way, I only turn it aside, and have not the least sentiment of an obstacle.

But since we have separated, and you are no longer there, this idea of correspondence by letters has returned to torment me — What is the reason, I have said to myself, of this additional privation? Why is it, because we are at some distance, we have nothing more to say to each other? Suppose that a fortunate concurrence of circumstances should bring us together

for a day, shall we then employ in conversation the time that ought to be wholly dedicated to enjoyment, which letters between us would prevent? I say enjoyment, my dear friend; for with you the very moments of repose furnish, too, a delicious enjoyment; in a word, whenever such a happy opportunity offers, the conclusion is still separation; and one is so solitary, it is then a letter becomes truly precious: if not read, it is sure to be the only object that employs the eye. Ah! there can be no doubt, but one may look at a letter without reading it; as I think that I even could have some pleasure at night by barely touching your portrait.

Your portrait have I said? but a letter is the portrait of the soul; it has not, like a cold image, that degree of stagnation so opposite to love; it yields to all our actions by turns; it becomes animated, gives us enjoyment,

ment, and sinks into repose — All your sentiments are precious to me ; and will you deprive me of the means of becoming possessed of them ?

Are you quite sure that a desire to write to me will never torment you ? If in the midst of your solitude your heart should be too much compressed or dilated ; if a joyous emotion should pass to your soul ; if an involuntary sadness should disturb it for a moment, it would not then be in the bosom of your friend that you would pour out your happiness or distress ; you would then have a sensation he should not share ; and you would punish him to wander in solitude and distrust far from you. My friend, my dearest friend ! you are to pronounce — I have only proposed to myself to discuss the question with you, and not to over-rule you — I have only offered you reasons — I dare hope I should have stood on

stronger ground if I had proceeded to entreaties—I shall endeavour, then, if you should persist, not to be afflicted ; I shall use my efforts to tell myself what you would have wrote to me ; but you would tell it better than I, and I should have a much higher gratification in hearing it from you.

Adieu, my charming friend ! The hour approaches at last, when I shall be able to see you : I fly from you with the more haste, in order the sooner to meet you again.

Paris, Dec. 3, 17—.

L E T-

L E T T E R C L I.

*The Viscount de VALMONT to the
Marchioness de MERTEUIL.*

SURELY, Marchioness, you do not take me to be such a novice, to imagine I could be duped in the tête-à-tête which I found you in this afternoon; or by the *astonishing chance* that led Danceny to your house! Not but your well-practised countenance wonderfully assumed a calm serenity of expression; or that you, by the most trifling word, betrayed, which sometimes happens, the least disorder or uneasiness. I will even allow your submissive looks served you eminently; and could they have made themselves as well credited as readily understood, far from having or harbouring the

least suspicion, I should not at all have doubted the great vexation this *troublesome trio* gave you. But to display to greater advantage those extraordinary talents, to insure the success you promised yourself, to carry on the deception you intended, you should have formed your inexperienced lover with more care.

Since you have begun to educate youth, you should teach your pupils not to blush or be disconcerted at a little raillery; not to deny so warmly for one woman, the same charge which they so faintly excuse themselves in for all others: teach them also to learn to hear encomiums on their mistress, without enhancing them.

And if you permit them to fix their looks on you in the circle, let them be taught to disguise that glance of enjoyment which is so easy to discover, and which they so unskilfully blend with the glance of love — Then you will be able to exhibit them in your
public.

public exercises, and their behaviour will not do any prejudice to their sage institutrix. Even myself, happy to be able to contribute to your celebrity, will compose and publish the exercises to be performed in this new college.

But I am astonished, I must own, that you should have undertaken to treat me as a school-boy. O! with any other woman, what pleasure I should have in being revenged! How transcendent it would be to that she should think to deprive me of! Yes, it is for you alone I condescend to give preference to satisfaction rather than revenge: and do not think I am restrained by the least doubt or uncertainty — I know all.

You have been in Paris now four days, and each day Danceny has been with you, and you have not admitted any one but him — even this day your door was still close; and had your

porter's assurance been equal to his mistress's, I should not have seen you: yet you wrote me I might depend on being the first informed of your arrival. Of that same arrival, the particular day of which could not be ascertained, although you was writing to me the eve of your departure — Can you deny those facts, or will you attempt to excuse them? They are both equally impossible; and still I keep my temper! Acknowledge here your power; be satisfied to have experienced it, but do not any longer abuse it. We know each other, Marchioness; that should be sufficient.

To-morrow you are to be out for the day you told me; be it so, if you really go out, and you think I shall know it: but you will be home in the evening; we shall not have too much time until the next day to settle our difficult reconciliation. Let me know, then, if it will be at your house, *or*
yonder,

yonder, we shall make our numerous reciprocal expiations. But no more of Danceny; your wrong head had filled itself with his idea, and I am willing to overlook this delirium of your fancy; but remember, from this moment, that what was only a whim, would become a decided preference. I am not tempered for such an humiliation, neither do I expect to receive it from you.

I even expect this sacrifice will be but trifling to you — If it should be a little troublesome, I think, however, I have set you a tolerable example! A sensible and lovely woman, who existed for me only, who, perhaps, at this instant, is expiring with love and grief, may well be worth a young scholar, who, if you will, wants neither wit or accomplishments, but is deficient in consistency.

Adieu, Marchioness! I say nothing of my sentiments for you; all I can do

at present is not to scrutinize my heart. I wait your answer. Remember, the easier it is for you to make me forget the injury you have done me, the more a denial, even the least delay, would engrave it in indelible characters on my heart.

Paris, Dec. 3, 17—.

L E T T E R CLII.

*The Marchioness de MERTEUIL to the
Viscount de VALMONT.*

TAKE care, Viscount; have a little more regard for my extreme timidity. How do you think I can support the unsufferable idea of your indignation; but especially that I do not sink under the terror of your vengeance? particularly as you know, if you defamed me, it would be impossible

ble for me to return the compliment. In vain should I babble; your existence would nevertheless be brilliant and peaceful: for what would you have to dread? Only to be under the necessity of retiring if you had an opportunity. But could one not live in a foreign country as well as here? And to sum up all, provided the court of France would let you be quiet in the one you chuse to settle in, it would be only changing the field of your victories. After endeavouring to bring you back to your *sang froid* by these moral considerations, let us resume our own affairs.

You do not know, Viscount, the reasons I never married again. It was not, I assure you, for want of several advantageous matches being offered to me; it was solely that no one should have a right to control me. It was not even a dread of not being able to pursue my inclinations, for

certainly, at all events, that I should have done: but it would have pained me if any one should even have a right to complain. On the whole, it was that I would not wish to deceive but for my own pleasure, and not through necessity. And behold you write me the most matrimonial letter it is possible to conceive! You tell me of the injuries I have committed, and the favours you have granted! I cannot conceive how it is possible to be indebted to one where nothing is due.

Now for the business. You found Danceny at my house, and you was displeased; be it so: but what conclusion do you draw from thence? Why, that it was the effect of chance, as I told you, or of my inclination, which I did not tell you. In the first instance, your letter is wrong; in the second, ridiculous. It was well worth the trouble of writing! But you are
I jealous,

jealous, and jealousy never debates. Well, I will argue for you.

You have a rival, or you have not. If you have a rival, you must please, to obtain the preference over him; and if you have none, you must still please, to avoid having one. In all cases the same invariable conduct must be observed. Why, then, will you torment yourself? — And why torment me? Have you, then, lost the secret of being the most amiable? And are you no longer certain of your success? Come, come, Viscount, you do yourself injustice. But that is not the case, for I will not, even in your mind, have you give yourself so much uneasiness. You wish less for my condescension, than an opportunity of abusing your power. Fie! you are very ungrateful! I think this is tolerably sentimental; and was I to continue any time, this letter might become

come very tender : but you don't deserve it.

Neither do you deserve I should enter farther in my justification. To punish you for your suspicions, you shall keep them ; so that I shall make no reply as to the time of my return, or Danceny's visits. You have taken great trouble to be informed of them, most certainly : and pray what progress have you made by it ? I hope you received great pleasure from your enquiries ; as to mine, it has not been in the least detrimental to them.

All I can say, then, to your threatening letter is this—it has neither the gift of pleasing, nor power to intimidate me ; and that at this present time I am not in the least disposed to grant your request.

And, indeed, to receive you, as you exhibit yourself now, would be a downright act of infidelity : it would not be a renewal with my former lover ;
it

it would be taking a new one, many degrees inferior to him. I have not so soon forgot the first, to be deceived. The Valmont I loved was a charming fellow. I will even own, I never met a more amiable man. I beg, Viscount, if you find him, to bring him to me, he will be always well received.

Acquaint him, however, that it cannot by any means be either to-day or to-morrow. His Menæchmus has done him some harm, and was I in too much haste, I should dread a deception; or, perhaps, I have given my word to Danceny for those two days: moreover, your letter informs me you do not jest; when one breaks their word, therefore, you see you must wait.

That is, however, of very little consequence, as you can always be revenged on your rival. He will not treat your mistress worse than you will his;

his; and, after all, is not one woman as good as another? These are your own principles. Even she who should be *tender and sensible, who existed only for you, who was dying of love and grief*, would nevertheless be sacrificed to the first whim, or the dread of being ridiculed for a moment; and yet you would have one constrain themselves! Ah! that is not reasonable.

Adieu, Viscount! become once more amiable. It is the utmost of my wishes to find you charming as ever. When I am certain of it, I engage to prove it to you — indeed, I am too good natured.

Paris, Dec. 4, 17—.

L E T-

L E T T E R CLIII.

*Viscount de VALMONT to the Marchio-
ness de MERTEUIL.*

I REPLY to your letter on the instant, and will endeavour to be explicit; which is not an easy matter with you, when you have once determined not to understand.

Many words are not necessary to convince us, each has the power of ruining the other; we have an equal interest to keep fair with one another: that is not the business at present. But between the violent determination of destruction, and doubtless the more eligible one of being still united as hitherto, or of even being more so, by renewing our first attachment; between those two parties, I say, there
are

are a thousand more to be taken. It was not, then, ridiculous to tell you, neither is it to repeat, that from this day I will either be your lover or your enemy.

I am very sensible the choice will give you some uneasiness ; that it would be more convenient for you to shuffle. I am also satisfied, you never liked to be confined to yes or no : but you must be sensible, I cannot let you from this small circle, without risking being deceived ; and you ought to have foreseen, I would not bear it. You are now to decide. I may leave you the choice, but will not remain in uncertainty.

I only inform you beforehand, I will not be imposed on by your arguments, good or bad ; that I will no longer be seduced by any ornamental wheedling with which you might embellish a refusal ; and that the hour of frankness is arrived. I wish for
nothing.

nothing more than to set you the example ; and I declare with pleasure, I prefer peace and union. If it is necessary to break one or the other, I think I have the right and the means.

Therefore I will add, the least obstacle you make, I shall consider as a declaration of war. You will observe, the answer I demand does not require either long or studied sentences : two words will be sufficient.

Paris, Dec. 4, 17—.

The answer of the Marchioness de Merteuil, wrote at the bottom of this same letter.

War, then.

L E T-

L E T T E R CLIV.

*Madame de VOLANGES to Madame de
ROSEMONDE.*

THE journal will inform you much better than I can, my dear friend, the melancholy state of our patient. Totally employed in my attendance on her, I have scarce time to write to you, as there are other matters to be attended to as well as her disorder. Here is a specimen of one which most certainly I did not in the least expect. I have received a letter from M. de Valmont, who has been pleased to chuse me for a confidant, and even his mediatrix with Madame de Tourvel, to whom he wrote under my cover. I returned the one when I answered the other. I transmit you my answer ;
and

and I believe you will be of my opinion, that I neither could or ought to have any thing to do with what he requests. Had I been even inclined to it, our unhappy friend was unable to understand me. Her phrenzy is incessant. But what do you think of M. de Valmont's distraction? Is it real, or does he mean to deceive the world to the last?*

If he is sincere this time, he may well say, he has made himself happy. I believe he will not be well pleased with my answer: but, I own, every thing that fixes my attention on this unhappy adventure, raises my resentment more and more against the author of it.

Adieu, my dear friend! I must return to my melancholy employment,

* Nothing having appeared in this correspondence that could resolve this doubt, we chose to suppress Valmont's letter.

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which becomes more so, by the small prospect there is of success. I need not repeat my sentiments for you.

Paris, Dec. 5, 17—.

L E T T E R CLV.

The Viscount de VALMONT to the Chevalier DANCENY.

I CALLED on you twice, my dear Chevalier; but since you have thrown off the character of a lover for the man of intrigue, you are very properly invisible: however, your valet assured me you would be at home to night; that you had ordered him to expect you. I, who am well acquainted with your designs, immediately conjectured it would be but for a short time for fashion's sake, and that you would immediately pursue

you

your victorious career. Go on; I must applaud you: but, perhaps, you will be tempted to alter your course for this night. You are yet acquainted with only half your business; I must let you into the other half, and then you will resolve. Take time, then, to read my letter. It will not dissipate you from your enjoyments; on the contrary, its object is to give you your choice.

If you had opened your mind confidentially to me; if you had told me the part of your secrets you left me to guess at, I should with my zeal, and less awkwardness, have smoothed the path of your progression. But let us set out from this point. Whatever resolution you take would, at worst, be the summit of good fortune to any one else.

You have a rendezvous for to-night: have you not? With a charming woman, whom you adore? For

at

at your age, where is the woman one does not adore for, at least, the first eight days? The field of action should also add greatly to your enjoyment—A delicious little villa, *which was taken for you only*, must embellish voluptuousness with the charms of mysteriousness and liberty. All is agreed on : you are expected ; and you are inflamed with desire to be there ! All this we both know, though you told me nothing of it. Now I will tell you what you do not know ; but you must be told.

Since my return to Paris, I have been taken up with contriving the means of an interview between you and Mademoiselle de Volanges : I promised it ; and when I last mentioned it to you, I had reason to expect from your answer, I may say, from your transports, I was exerting myself in your happiness. I could not succeed alone in this difficult undertaking :

taking : but after having settled every thing, I left the rest with your young mistress. She found resources in her affection, resources which escaped my experience ; after all, to your great misfortune she has succeeded. She told me this evening, for these two days past all obstacles are removed, and your happiness depends on yourself alone.

She flattered herself, also, for those two days, to have been able to send you this news herself, and notwithstanding her mama's absence you would have been admitted : but you never once shewed yourself ! and I must farther tell you, whether from reason or capriciousness, the little thing did not seem pleased at your want of assiduity. At last she found means to see me, and made me promise to deliver you the inclosed letter as soon as possible. From the eagerness she expressed, I would venture to

lay a wager she gives you an assignation this night; however, I promised her, upon honour and friendship, you should have the tender summons in the course of the day, and neither can or will break my word.

Now, young gentleman, how will you behave in this business? Placed between coquetry and love, pleasure and happiness, which will you chuse? If I was writing to the Danceny of three months ago, or even the Danceny of a week past, certain of the emotions of his heart, I should be certain of his proceedings: but, the Danceny of the day, carried away by women, hunting after intrigue, and, according to custom, a little profligate, will he prefer a timorous young girl, who has nothing but beauty, innocence, and love, to the allurements of a common *intriguer*?

For my part, my dear friend, I think, even in your new system, which,

which, I confess, I am not much averse to, circumstances would decide the preference to the lover. First, it is an additional conquest, then the novelty is attracting, and the fear of losing the fruits of your addresses, by neglecting to gather them; for to take it in this point of view, it would really be an opportunity missed, which is not always to be regained, especially in a first weakness: often in this case, a moment of ill humour, a jealous suspicion, even less, may prevent the finest conquest. Sinking virtue will sometimes grasp at a twig; and once escaped, will be on its guard, and not easily surpris'd.

On the other hand, you hazard nothing; not even a rupture; at most, a little quarrel: then your purchase with a little trouble the pleasure of a reconciliation; for what other resource has a woman you have already enjoyed but compliance? What would she

get by severity ? The privation of pleasure, without profit, for her glory.

If, as I suppose, you make love your choice, which appears to me, also, that of reason, I think it would be more prudent not to send any apology for the disappointment of the rendezvous ; leave her in expectancy ; for if you venture to give a reason, she will, perhaps, be tempted to dive into the truth. Women are curious and obstinate. All may be discovered : I myself, you see, am now an example of this truth. But if you let her remain in hope, which will be supported by vanity, it will not be lost until a long time after the proper hour for information is over ; then to-morrow you will have time to chuse the insurmountable obstacle that detained you : you may have been sick, dead if necessary, or any thing else that has almost made you frantic, and all will be made up.

But

But which ever side you incline to, I only beg you will inform me; and as I am totally unconcerned, I will always think you have done right. Adieu, my dear friend!

All I have to add is, I regret M. de Tourvel. I am in a state of desperation at being separated from her; and I would lay down one half my life, to devote the other to her. Ah! believe me, there is no felicity but in love.

Paris, Dec. 5, 17—.

L E T T E R C L V I .

CECILIA VOLANGES *to the Chevalier*
DANCENY.

(Annexed to the former.)

HOW happens it, my dear friend, I no longer see you; although I never cease wishing for it? Your inclinations then, are no longer like mine! Ah, it is now I am truly sorrowful! More so, than when we were totally separate. The affliction I was used to receive from others, now proceeds from you, which is more insupportable.

For some days past, mama is never at home, and you know it — I flattered myself you would have taken the opportunity; but you do not at all think of me — I am very unhappy —

How

How often have you told me, I did not love as much as you did — I was certain it was otherwise, and am now convinced. Had you called, you might have seen me; for I am not like you; I think of nothing but how to contrive to see you — You deserve I should not tell you all I have done: but I love you so much, and have so strong a desire to see you, I can't help telling you, and then I shall see if you really love me.

I have secured the porter, and he has promised every time you come no one shall see you; and we may confide in him, for he is a very honest man. There is then no other difficulty to prevent any one in the house seeing you, and that will be very easy to do; it is only to come at night; then there will be no danger at all — for since mama goes out every day, she always goes to bed at eleven;

so that we shall have a great deal of time.

The porter told me when you had a mind to come this way, instead of knocking at the door, you need only tap at the window, and he would open the door directly, and then you can readily find the *back-stairs*—As you will not have any light, I will leave my chamber door open, which will give you some little. You must take great care not to make any noise, particularly passing by mama's little door. As to my waiting maid's room, it is of no signification, for she has promised me not to be awake; and she is also a very good girl! When you are going away it will be the same thing—Now we shall see whether you will come.

O, Lord! I don't know why my heart beats so while I am writing to you! Is it the fore-runner of any misfortune, or is it the hope of seeing
you

you that makes me thus? This I know, I never loved you so much, and never so much wished to tell you so. Come, then, my dear, dear friend, that I may a thousand times repeat I love you — I adore you, and never will love any but you.

I found a method to inform M. de Valmont I wanted to see him, and had something to say to him; and as he is our very good friend, will come to-morrow certainly. I will beg of him to give you my letter immediately — That I shall expect you to-morrow night, and you will not fail to come, if you have not a mind to make your Cecilia very miserable.

Adieu, my dear friend! I embrace you with all my heart.

Paris, Dec. 4, 17—.

L E T T E R CLVJ.

*The Chevalier DANCENY to the Vis-
count de VALMONT.*

DOUBT neither the emotions of my heart, or my proceedings, my dear Viscount — Is it possible I could resist a wish of my Cecilia's? Ah! it is she, and she alone, I will ever love! Her openness, her tenderness, have fixed such a spell over me, that nothing can ever efface, although I have been weak enough to suffer a distraction. Imperceptibly, I may say, engaged in another adventure, the remembrance of Cecilia has disturbed me in the tenderest moments; and perhaps my heart never rendered her a more faithful homage, than at the in-

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stant

stant I was unfaithful to her. However, my dear friend, let us spare her delicacy, and hide my fault; not to deceive, but only not to afflict her. Cecilia's happiness is the most ardent wish of my heart; and I should never forgive myself a fault which should cost her a tear.

I feel I deserved the banter you pass upon me, relative to what you call my new system: but I beg you will be assured, I am not led by them at this time; I am resolved to prove it to-morrow — I will go and accuse myself even to her who has been the cause and partner of my error — I will tell her; “read my heart; there
 “you will see the tenderest friend-
 “ship; friendship united to desire
 “so much resembles love! We have
 “both been deceived; but although
 “liable to error, I am incapable of
 “deceit.” I know my friend well; she has probity, and is gentle; she will
 I 6 do

do more than pardon, she will approve my conduct; she has often reproached herself for having betrayed friendship: her delicacy has often alarmed her love: more considerate than me, she will strengthen my mind with those useful apprehensions which I rashly endeavoured to stifle in hers — I shall owe my reformation to her, and my felicity to you. O, my friends! partake my gratitude: the idea of being indebted to you for my happiness, augments its value.

Adieu, my dear Viscount! the excess of my joy does not prevent me from thinking and sharing your troubles. Why can I not serve you? M. de Tourvel still remains inexorable then! It is said she is very ill — May she at once recover health and condescension, and for ever make you happy! They are the vows of friendship; and I dare hope will be granted by love.

I would

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I would write some time longer, but time presses, and perhaps Cecilia already expects me.

Paris, Dec. 5, 17—.

LETTER CLVIII.

The Viscount de VALMONT to the Marchioness de MERTEUIL.

WELL, Marchioness, how are you after the pleasures of last night? Are you not a little fatigued? You must acknowledge Danceny is a charming fellow! That lad is a prodigy! You did not expect such things from him; is it not true? I must do myself justice; such a rival deserved I should be sacrificed to him. Seriously he has a number of good qualities! So much love, so much constancy, so much delicacy! Ah! if ever he loves you as
he

he does his Cecilia, you will have no occasion to dread being rivalled; she has proved it this night. Perhaps through dint of coquetry, another woman may entice him for a short time; a young man hardly knows how to resist incitements; but you see a single word from the beloved object is sufficient to dissipate the illusion; so that there is nothing wanting to complete your happiness, but being that beloved object.

Certainly you will not be mistaken; you have such exquisite feeling it is not to be apprehended: yet the friendship that unites us, as sincere on my side as acknowledged on yours, made me wish you should experience the proof of this night; it is an effort of my zeal — It has succeeded — But no acknowledgements — it is not worth while — nothing more easy.

But to the point; what did it cost me? Why a slight sacrifice, and a little

tle

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the address. I consented to share with the young man the favours of his mistress; but he had as great a right to them as I had, and I was not in the least uneasy about them. The letter the young creature wrote him, I dictated; but it was only to gain a little time, as we could employ it to so much better purpose. What I wrote with it was nothing, almost nothing. Some few friendly reflections to direct the new lover; but upon honour they were useless — To tell the truth, he did not hesitate a moment. Moreover, he is to wait on you to-day to relate all; and it certainly will give you great pleasure! He will tell you, *read my heart*; so he writes me; and you see that I will settle every thing. I hope that in reading what he pleases, you will also perhaps read, that such young lovers are dangerous — and also, that it is better to have me for a friend than an enemy.

Paris, Dec. 6, 17—.

L E T.

L E T T E R C L I X .

*The Marchioness de MERTEUIL to the
Viscount de VALMONT.*

I DO not like to have scurvy jests added to bad actions; it is not agreeable to my taste or manner. When I have cause of complaint against a person, I do not ridicule, I do better; I take revenge. However well pleased you may be with yourself now, do not forget it is not the first time you have applauded yourself before-hand; and singular, in the hope of a triumph that would escape from you, at the instant you was congratulating yourself on it. Adieu.

Paris, Dec. 6, 17—

E. E. T.

L E T T E R CLX.

*Madame de VOLANGES to Madame
de ROSEMONDE.*

I WRITE this from the chamber of your unhappy friend, whose state is pretty much the same: there is to be a consultation held this afternoon, of four physicians — I need not tell you this resource is oftner a proof of the danger than the means of relief.

However, it seems her head is something better since last night — her waiting maid told me this morning, her mistress ordered her to be called about twelve: she desired they should be left alone, and dictated a pretty long letter — Julie adds, while she was folding it, Madame Tourvel was attacked with her delirium, so that the
girl

girl did not know who to direct it to. I was at first surprised the letter itself was not sufficient to inform her; but telling me she was afraid of committing a mistake, and that her mistress had ordered her to send it away immediately, I took it upon me to open it.

There I found the inclosed writing, which is certainly not addressed to any body, being addressed to too many— Yet, I believe, our unhappy friend at first intended it for M. de Valmont, but gave way imperceptibly, to her disordered ideas. However, I thought it ought not to be sent to any one.— I send it you, as you will see better than I can tell you, the thoughts that engage the head of our patient. Whilst she continues so intensely affected, I shall have very little hopes—the body seldom recovers when the mind is so agitated.

Adieu,

Adieu, my dear and worthy friend!
I am happy you are far from the dismal spectacle I have incessantly before my eyes.

Paris, Dec. 6, 17.—

LETTER CLXI.

The Presidente de TOURVEL.

(Dictated by her, and wrote by her waiting maid.)

CRUEL and mischievous being!
will thou never be tired persecuting me? Is it not enough to have tormented, degraded, abased? Will thou then rob me of the peaceful tomb? In the gloom of this abode, where shame has drove me to bury myself, are my sufferings to have no respite; is hope to

to be for ever banished? I do not require a favour I am undeserving of: I shall suffer without complaint, if my sufferings do not exceed my strength: but do not make my torments insupportable — Leave me my sorrows, and take away the cruel remembrance of the advantages I have lost. Although thou hast ravished them from me, do not again draw the afflicting picture of them — I was happy and innocent — I gazed on thee and lost my peace — I listened to thee and was guilty — Thou cause of all my crimes, who gave thee authority to punish them?

Where are now the friends to whom I was dear? My misfortunes have frightened them—No one dares come near me — I am oppressed and left without relief — I die and no one weeps over me — I am debarred of every consolation — Pity stops on the brink of the abyss where the criminal plunges

plunges—remorse tears my heart, and its cries are not heard.

And thou who I have injured ; thou, whose esteem adds to my torment — thou who only hast a right to revenge ; why art thou far from me ? Come, punish a faithless woman—Let me suffer the tortures I deserve — I should have already bowed to thy vengeance, but wanted courage to inform thee of thy shame ; it was not diffimulation, it was respect. Let this letter at least acquaint thee with my repentance. Heaven has taken thy cause in hand, to punish an injury to which thou wast a stranger — It was heaven tied my tongue—It was heaven prevented my design, lest you should pardon a crime it was resolved to punish — It snatched me from thy commiseration, which would have opposed its judgment.

But unmerciful in its vengeance, it delivered me up to him who ruined me ;

me; at once to make me suffer for him and by him. In vain I strive to fly from him; still he follows me—he is there; incessantly he besets me—How different from himself! His eyes show nothing but hatred and contempt—His lips utter insult and reproach—His arms surround me only to destroy me—Is there no one will save me from his savage rage?

How! It is he! I am not deceiv'd; it is he I see again—Oh, my lovely friend! receive me in thy tender arms; hide me in thy bosom! It is thee; yes, it is thyself—What fatal illusion deceived me? Ah, how have I suffered during thy absence—Let us part no more: let us never part. Let me breathe—Feel my heart, how it beats! Ah! it is no longer with fear, it is the soft emotion of love; why refuse my tender caresses? Turn thy languishing eyes towards me—What are those bands you want to break? Why those
solemn

solemn preparations for death? What can thus alter thy countenance? Leave me! I shudder! O, God! This monster again! My dear friends, do not abandon me — You that wanted me to avoid him; help me to resist him — And you more lenient, who promised to soften my sorrows, why do not you come to me? Where are you both? If I must no longer see you, at least answer this letter, let me hear you still love me.

Leave me, then, cruel man! What new transport inspires thee? Art thou afraid a soft sentiment should invade me? thou redoublest my torments — You will force me to hate you — O, how painful is hatred! how it corrodes the heart from whence it is distilled! Why will you persecute me? What can you have more to say to me? Have you not made it impossible for me either to hear or answer you. Farewel.

Paris, Dec. 6, 17.—

L E T T E R CLXII.

Chevalier DANCENY to the Viscount
de VALMONT.

I AM informed, Sir, of your behaviour towards me — I also know that after having basely sported with me, you have dared to applaud yourself and brag of it — The proof of your treachery I have seen under your hand — I cannot help acknowledging my heart was pierced, and I felt some shame at having myself so much assisted in the odious abuse you made of my blind confidence: still I do not envy you this shameful advantage—I am only curious to know, whether you will equally preserve them all over me — This I shall be
in-

informed of, if, as I hope, you will be to-morrow morning, between eight and nine, at the gate of the wood of Vincennes, village of St. Maude, I will take care to provide every thing necessary for the ecclesiasticalment, which remains for me to take with you.

The Chevalier DANCENY.

Paris, Dec. 6, at night, 17—

L E T T E R CLXIII.

M. BERTRAND to *Madame de ROSE-*
MONDE.

Madam,

IT is with the greatest grief I find myself obliged to fulfil my duty, by giving you an intelligence that will cause you so much affliction. Permit me first to recommend the exertion of

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that pious resignation which every one has so often admired in you, and which alone can support us among the evils of this miserable life.

M. your nephew — Good God! must I afflict so respectable a lady! M. your nephew, had the misfortune to fall this morning in a duel he fought with M. the Chevalier Dancey. I am entirely unacquainted with the cause of the quarrel: but it appears, by the note which I found in M. the Viscount's pocket, and which I have the honour to send you; it appears, I say, he was not the aggressor: and yet heaven permitted him to fall!

I was at M. the Viscount's, waiting for him, at the very time he was brought back to his hotel. You cannot conceive the shock I received, seeing M. your nephew brought in by two of his servants, bathed in blood. He had two thrusts of a sword in his
body,

body, and was very weak. M. Danceny was also there, and even wept. Ah ! certainly he ought to weep — it is a pretty time to cry when one has been the cause of an irreparable misfortune !

For my part, I could not contain myself ; and notwithstanding my insignificancy, I could not help telling him my thoughts. But it was then M. the Viscount shewed himself truly great : he commanded me to hold my tongue ; and he even took his murderer by the hand, called him his friend, embraced him before us three, and said to us, “ I command you to have
 “ for this gentleman all the respect
 “ that is due to a brave and gallant
 “ man.” Moreover, he ordered to be given him, in my presence, some very voluminous papers, that I know nothing of, but which I know he set a value on. Then he desired they should be left together for a little

while; however, I sent immediately for assistance, as well spiritual as temporal: but, alas! the evil was without remedy. In less than half an hour after, M. the Viscount was insensible. He could only receive the extreme unction; and the ceremony was scarcely over, before he breathed his last.

Great God! when I received in my arms at his birth this precious prop of so illustrious a family, could I ever have thought he would expire in my arms, and that I should deplore his death! a death so sudden, and so unfortunate! — my tears flow in spite of me. I ask pardon, Madam, for taking the liberty of mingling my sorrows with your's: but in every station, tenderness and sensibility will operate; and I should be very ungrateful if I did not lament, during my life, a nobleman who was so kind, and placed such a confidence in me.

To-

To-morrow, when the body will be removed, I will order every thing to be sealed, and you may depend on my care intirely in every thing. I need not inform you, Madam, this unhappy event puts an end to the entail, and leaves you entirely at liberty. If I can be of any service, I beg, Madam, you will give me your orders, which shall be executed with the greatest zeal and utmost punctuality.

I am, with the most profound respect,

Madam,

your most humble

BERTRAND.

Paris, Dec. 7, 17—.

L E T T E R CLXIV.

*Madame de ROSEMONDE to M.
BERTRAND.*

I THIS instant received your letter, my dear Bertrand, informing me of the shocking event, to which my nephew is become the unhappy victim — yes, undoubtedly, I shall have orders to give you ; and it is they only can take off my thoughts a while from this afflicting intelligence.

M. Danceny's challenge, which you sent me, is a convincing proof he was the aggressor ; my intention therefore is, you should commence a prosecution in my name : for although my nephew, in compliance with his natural generosity, may have pardoned his enemy, his murderer, I ought
to.

to avenge at once his death, religion, and humanity. One cannot excite too much the severity of the laws against those remains of barbarism which still infect our morals; and I do not believe, in such cases, the forgiveness of injuries can be commanded us; therefore I expect you will prosecute this business with all that zeal and activity of which I know you so capable, and which you owe to my nephew's memory.

But first, take care to confer with M. the President — from me. I do not write to him, as I am so overwhelmed with grief. You will, therefore, apologise for me, and communicate this to him:

Adieu, my dear Bertrand! I am well pleased with your conduct, and thank you for your good inclinations, and am your sincere friend.

Castle of —;

Dec. 8, 17—.

K 4:

L E T-

L E T T E R CLXV.

*Madame de VOLANGES to Madame de
ROSEMONDE.*

I KNOW you are already informed, my dear and worthy friend, of the loss you have sustained. I know the tender affection you had for M. de Valmont, and I most sincerely partake of the affliction you must endure. I am truly grieved to add new griefs to those you have already experienced: but, alas! nothing now can be done for our unhappy friend but to deplore her fate. We lost her at eleven o'clock last night. By a fatality linked to her fate, and which seemed to baffle all human prudence, this short interval that she survived M. de Valmont was sufficient to inform her of his

his death, and, as she said herself, not be able to sink under the weight of her miseries until their measure was filled.

You already know, that for these two days she was insensible; — yesterday morning, when her physician came, and we drew near her bed, she did not know either of us, and we could not obtain a word or a sign. We were scarcely returned to the fire, while the physician was relating to me the melancholy event of M. de Valmont's death, but this unhappy woman recovered her reason: whether nature alone produced this revolution, or whether it was occasioned by the frequent repetition of the words, M. de Valmont and death, which may have recalled the only ideas with which her mind had been so long engaged.

Be it what it may, she suddenly drew back the curtain of the bed, ex-

claiming, "What! What do you
" say? M. de Valmont dead!" I
hoped to make her believe she was
mistaken. At first I endeavoured to
persuade her she did not hear well:
but all in vain; for she insisted the
physician should begin the cruel tale
again; — on my endeavouring to
dissuade her from it, she called me to
her, saying, in a low voice, "Why
" will you deceive me? Was he not
" already dead to me?" I then was
forced to acquiesce.

Our unhappy friend appeared at
first to listen to the story with great
tranquillity: but she soon interrupted
him, saying, "Enough; I know
" enough:" and immediately ordered
her curtains to be closed. — When
the physician went to perform the du-
ties of his office, she never would suf-
fer him to come near her.

As soon as he was gone, she also
sent away her nurse and her waiting
maid.

maid. When we were alone, she requested I would assist her to kneel on her bed, and support her. Then she remained some time silent; — and without any other expression than her tears, which flowed most abundantly, joining her hands, and raising them towards heaven; “Almighty God!” said she in a weak but fervent tone, “I submit to thy just judgment: but in thy mercy forgive Valmont. Let not my misfortunes, which I acknowledge, be laid to his charge, and I shall bless thy mercy!” I could not avoid, my dear and worthy friend, going into those digressions on a subject I am sensible must renew and aggravate your sorrows, as I am certain this prayer of Madame de Tourvel’s will give you much consolation.

After our friend had uttered those few words she fell in my arms; and she was scarcely settled in her bed, when she fainted for a considerable

time, and recovered with the usual helps. As soon as she came to herself, she begged I would send for Father Anselmus, saying, "He is the
" only physician I have now occa-
" sion for. I feel my miseries will
" soon be at end." She complained of a great oppression, and spoke with great difficulty.

Some time after, she ordered her waiting maid to give me a little box, which I send you, that contains papers belonging to her, and charged me to send them to you immediately after her death.* Then she conversed about you, of your friendship for her, as much as her situation would permit, and with great tenderness.

Father Anselmus came about four o'clock, and stayed near an hour alone with her. When we returned, her

* This box contained all the letters relative to her adventure with M. de Valmont.

countenance was calm and serene; but it was easily to be seen Father Anselmus had wept a great deal. He remained to assist at the last ceremonies of the church. This solemn and melancholy sight became more so by the contrast of the composed and settled resignation of the sick person, with the silent grief of the venerable confessor, who was dissolved in tears beside her. The afflicting scene became general, and she who we all deplored was the only one unmoved.

The remainder of the day was spent in the usual prayers, which was now and then interrupted by the frequent faintings of the dear woman. At last, about eleven, she seemed more in pain, with great oppression. I put out my hand to feel her arm; she had still strength to place it on her heart; I could no longer feel it beat, and, indeed, our unhappy friend expired instantly.

You

You may remember, my dear friend, when you last came to town, about a year ago, chatting together about some people whose happiness then appeared to us more or less complete; we indulged ourselves in the thought of this same woman's felicity, whose misfortune we now lament. Such an assemblage of virtues! so many attractions and accomplishments! so sweet, so amiable!—a husband she loved, and by whom she was adored! a circle of friends, in whom she delighted, and was the delight! a figure, youth, fortune! so many united advantages are lost by one act of imprudence! O, Providence! how incomprehensible and adorable are thy decrees!—I fear I shall increase your sorrow by giving way to my own, and therefore will no longer dwell on the melancholy theme.

My daughter is a little indisposed. On hearing from me this morning

the sudden death of two persons of her acquaintance, she was taken ill, and I ordered her to be put to bed. I hope, however, this slight disorder will not be attended with any bad consequence. At her age they are not accustomed to such chagrines, and they leave a more lively and stronger impression. This active sensibility is certainly a laudable quality. What we daily see ought to make us dread it. Adieu, my dear and worthy friend !

Paris, Dec. 9, 17—.

L E T.

L E T T E R CLXVI.

M. BERTRAND *to Madame de ROSE-*
MONDE.

Madam,

IN consequence of the orders you honoured me with, I waited on M. the President de —, and communicated your letter to him, informing him at the same time, as you desired, I should do nothing without his advice. This respectable magistrate commanded me to observe to you, the prosecution you intended against M. the Chevalier Danceny would equally affect the memory of Monsieur your nephew, and his honour would necessarily be tainted by the decree of the court; which would be, doubtless, a very great misfortune.

His

His opinion is, then, that you do not make any stir about the matter : but, on the contrary, that you should endeavour as much as possible to prevent the public officers from taking cognisance of this unfortunate business, which has already made too much noise.

These observations, so replete with wisdom, oblige me to wait your farther orders.

Permit me, Madam, to request, when you honour me with them, you will mention a word concerning your state of health, which, I dread much, so many crosses have impaired.

I hope you will pardon the liberty I take, as it proceeds from my zeal and attachment.

I am, with great respect,
Madam, your, &c.

Paris, Dec. 10, 17—.

L E T.

L E T T E R CLXVII.

ANONYMOUS *to the Chevalier DAN-*
CENY.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to inform you, your late affair with M. the Viscount de Valmont was this morning much talked of among the King's counsel within the bar, and that it is much to be feared the public officers will commence a prosecution. I thought this notice might be of service, either to set your friends at work, to stop the bad consequences, or, in case you could not succeed, to take every precaution for your personal security.

If you would permit me to add a piece of advice, I think you would do well, for some time at least, not to appear so much in public as you have
done.

done for some days — Although the world generally have great indulgence for those kind of affairs, yet there is a respect due to the laws which ought to be observed.

This precaution appears to me the more necessary, that I recollect a Madame de Rosemonde, who, I am told, is M. de Valmont's aunt, intended to prosecute you; if so, the courts could not refuse her petition: it would perhaps be proper application should be made to this lady.

Particular reasons prevent me from signing this letter; but I hope, though ignorant from whom it comes, you will nevertheless do justice to the sentiment that has dictated it.

I have the honour to be, &c.,

Paris, Dec. 10, 17.—

L E T—

L E T T E R CLXVIII.

*Madame de VOLANGES to Madame
de ROSEMONDE.*

THERE are, my dear and worthy friend, the strangest and most sad reports spread here, on account of Madame de Merteuil. I am certainly far from giving any credit to them; and I would venture to lay a wager, they are horrible slanders; but I know too well, how the most improbable wickedness readily gains credit; and how difficult it is to wipe away the impression they leave, not to be alarmed at those, though I think them so easy to be refuted. I wish, especially, they might be stopt in time, and before they spread abroad; but I did not know until late yesterday, the horri-

horrible things that are given out; and when I sent this morning, to Madame de Merteuil's, she was just then set out for the country for a couple of days—I could not learn where she was gone; her second woman, who I sent for, told me, her mistress had only given her orders to expect her on Thursday next; and none of her servants she left behind her knew any thing more. I cannot even think where she can be; as I do not recollect any of her acquaintance who stay so late in the country.

However, you will be able, I hope, to procure for me, between this and her return, some *éclaircissements* that may be useful to her; for these odious stories are founded on circumstances attendant on the death of M. de Valmont, of which you will probably have been informed, if there be any truth in them; or you can at least readily receive information, which I
par-

particularly request you to do — This is what is published, or at least whispered as yet, but will not certainly fail to blaze out more.

It is said the quarrel between M. de Valmont and Chevalier Danceny, is the work of Madame de Merteuil, who deceived them both; and, as it always happens, the rivals began by fighting, and did not come to an *éclaircissement* until after, which produced a sincere reconciliation: and in order to make M. de Merteuil known to Chevalier Danceny, and also in his own justification, M. de Valmont had added to his intelligence, a heap of letters, forming a regular correspondence which he had kept up with her; in which she relates, in the loosest manner, the most scandalous anecdotes of herself.

It is added, that Danceny in his first rage gave those letters to whoever had a mind to see them; and that now
they

they are all over Paris—Two of them in particular, are quoted*; in one of which, she gives a full history of her life and principles, which are said to be the most shocking imaginable—the other contains an entire justification of M. de Prevan, whose story you may recollect, by the proofs it gives, that he did nothing but acquiesce in the most pointed advances M. de Merteuil made him, and the rendezvous agreed on with her.

But I have fortunately the strongest reasons to believe those imputations as false as they are odious. First, we both know that M. de Valmont was not engaged about Madame de Merteuil; and I have all the reason in the world to think, Danceny was as far from thinking of her: so that I think it is demonstrable, that she could not be either the cause or object of the

* Letters lxxxi. and lxxxv.

quarrel.

quarrel. Neither can I comprehend what interest M. de Merteuil could have, who is supposed to be combined with M. de Prevan, to act a part which must be very disagreeable, by the noise it would occasion, and might be very dangerous for her, because she would thereby make an irreconcilable enemy of a man who was in possession of a part of her secrets, and who had then many partizans.— Still it is observable, since that adventure, not a single voice has been raised in favour of Prevan, and that even there has not been the least objection made on his side since.

Those reflections would induce me to suspect him to be the author of the reports that are now spread abroad, and to look on those enormities as the work of the revenge and hatred of a man who, finding himself lost in the opinion of the world, hopes, by such means, at least to raise doubts, and per-

perhaps make a useful diversion in his favour; but whatever cause they may proceed from, the best way will be to destroy such abominable tales as soon as possible; they would have dropped of themselves, if it should happen, as is very probable, that M. de Valmont and Danceny did not speak to each other after their unhappy affair, and that there had been no papers given.

Being impatient to be satisfied as to the truth of those facts, I sent this morning to M. Danceny's; he is not in Paris either; his servants told my valet de chambre, he had set out last night, on some advice he had received yesterday, and the place of his residence was a secret; probably he dreads the consequence of his affair; it is only from you then, my dear and worthy friend, I can learn such interesting particulars, that may be necessary for M. de Merteuil—I renew my

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request, and beg you will send them to me as soon as possible.

P. S. My daughter's indisposition had no bad consequences. She presents her respects.

Paris, Dec. 11, 17.—

L E T T E R CLXIX.

*The Chevalier DANCÉNY to Madame
de ROSEMONDE.*

Madam,

YOU will perhaps think the step I now take very extraordinary ; but I beseech you to hear before you condemn me, and do not look for either audacity or rashness, where there is nothing but respect and confidence. I will not dissemble the injury I have done you ; and during my whole life
I should

you; for my interest in this circumstance is so intimately linked with M. de Valmont's, that his memory would be involved in the same sentence you would have excited against me. I should then reasonably suppose, Madam, I should rather expect assistance than obstacles from you, in the endeavours I should be obliged to make, that this unhappy event should remain buried in oblivion.

But this resource of complicity, which is equally favourable to the innocent and guilty, is not sufficient to satisfy my delicacy; in wishing to set you aside as a party, I call on you as my judge: the esteem of those I respect is too dear, to suffer me to lose yours without defending it, and I think I am furnished with the means.

For if you will only agree, that revenge is permitted, or rather, that a man owes it to himself, when he is betrayed in his love, in his friendship,
and

and still more, in his confidence. If you agree to this, the wrongs I have done will disappear: I do not ask you to believe what I say; but read, if you have the resolution, the deposit I put into your hands*; the number of original letters seem to authenticate those, of which there is only copies. Moreover, I received those letters, as I have the honour to transmit them to you, from M. de Valmont himself. I have not added to them, nor have I taken any from them but two letters, which I thought proper to publish.

The one was necessary to the mutual vengeance of M. de Valmont and myself, to which we had an equal right, and of which he expressly gave

* It is from this correspondence, from that given at the death of M. de Tourvel, and the letters confided to M. Rosemonde, by Madame de Volanges, that the present collection has been compiled; the originals are still existing in the possession of Madame de Rosemonde's heirs.

me a charge. I moreover thought, it would be doing an essential service to society, to unmask a woman so really dangerous as Madame de Merteuil is, and who, as you see, is the only, the true cause, of what happened between M. de Valmont and me.

A sentiment of justice induced me to publish the second, for the justification of M. de Prevan, whom I scarcely know; but who did not in the least deserve the rigorous treatment he has met, nor the severity of the public opinion, still more formidable, under which he has languished so long, without being able to make any defence.

You will only find copies of those two letters, as I make it a point to keep the originals. I do not think I can put into safer hands a deposit, which, perhaps, I think of consequence to me not to be destroyed, but which
I should

I should be ashamed to abuse. I think, confiding those papers to you, Madam, I serve those who are interested, as well as if I returned them to themselves, and I preserve them from the embarrassment of receiving them from me, and of knowing I am no stranger to events, which undoubtedly they wish all the world to be unacquainted with.

I should, however, inform you, the annexed correspondence is only a part of a much more voluminous collection from which M. de Valmont drew it in my presence, and which you will find at the taking off the seals, entitled as I saw, *An open account between the Marchioness de Merteuil and Viscount de Valmont*. On this you will take what measures your prudence will suggest. I am with great respect,

Madam, &c.

P. S. Some advices I have received, and the opinion of some friends, have made me resolve to leave Paris for some time; but the place of my retreat, which is secret to every one, must not be so to you. If you do me the honour of an answer, I beg you will direct it to the commandery of—by P.—and under cover, to M. the commander of—— It is from his house I have the honour to write to you.

Paris, Dec. 12, 17—.

L E T.

L E T T E R CLXX.

*Madame de VOLANGES to Madame de
ROSEMONDE.*

I GO, my dear friend, from wonder to wonder, from sorrow to sorrow: one must be a mother to conceive my sufferings all yesterday morning — If my cruel uneasiness has been since alleviated, there still remains a piercing affliction, of which I cannot see the end.

Yesterday, about ten in the morning, surprised at not seeing my daughter, I sent my waiting maid to know what could occasion this delay — She returned instantly much frightened, and frightened me much more, by telling me my daughter was not in her apartment, and that since morning her

waiting maid had not seen her. Judge you my situation! I had all my servants called, particularly the porter, who all swore they knew nothing of her, nor gave me any intelligence on this occasion. I went immediately into her apartment; the disorder it was in soon convinced me, she did not go out until morning, but could not discover any thing to clear up my doubts. I examined her drawers, her bureau; found every thing in its place, and all her cloaths except the dress she had on when she went out: she did not even take the little money she had.

As she did not know until yesterday all that is said about M. de Merteuil; that she is very much attached to her; so much, that she did nothing but cry all night after—I also recollect she did not know M. de Merteuil was in the country; it struck me she went to see her friend, and that she was so foolish as to go alone: but the time elapsing,
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and no account of her, recalled all my uneasiness — Every instant increased my anxiety; and burning with impatience for information, I dared not take any step to be informed, lest I should give cause for a rumour, which perhaps I should afterwards wish to hide from all the world. In my life I never suffered so much.

At length, at past two o'clock, I received together a letter from my daughter, and one from the superior of the convent of ---- My daughter's letter only informed me, she was afraid I would oppose the vocation she had to a religious life, which she did not dare mention to me; the rest was only excusing herself for having taken this resolution without my leave, being assured I certainly would not disapprove it, if I knew her motives, which, however, she begged I would not enquire into.

The superior informed me, that seeing a young person come alone, she at first refused to receive her; but having interrogated, and learning who she was, she thought she served me, by giving an asylum to my daughter, not to expose her to run about, which she certainly was determined on doing. The superior offered me, as was reasonable, to give up my daughter, if I requested it; inviting me at the same time, not to oppose a vocation she calls so decided.

She writes me also, she could not inform me sooner of this event, by the difficulty she had of prevailing on my daughter to write to me; whose intent was, that no one should know where she had retired — What a cruel thing is the unreasonableness of children.

I went immediately to this convent. After having seen the superior, I desired to see my daughter; she came trembling, with some difficulty — I spoke
to

to her before the nuns, and then alone. All I could get out of her with a deal of crying, was, she could not be happy but in a convent; I resolved to give her leave to stay there; but not to be ranked among those who desired admittance as she wanted. I fear M. de Tourvel's and M. de Valmont's deaths have too much affected her young head. Although I respect much a religious vocation, I shall not without sorrow, and even dread, see my daughter embrace this state — I think we have already duties enow to fulfil, without creating ourselves new ones : moreover, it is not at her age we can judge what condition is suitable for us.

What increases my embarrassment, is the speedy return of M. de Ger-court — Must I break off this advantageous match? How then can one contribute to their children's happiness, if our wishes and cares are not
suffi-

sufficient? You would much oblige me to let me know how you would act in my situation; I cannot fix on any thing. There is nothing so dreadful as to decide on the fate of others; and I am equally afraid, on this occasion, of using the severity of a judge, or the weakness of a mother.

I always reproach myself with increasing your griefs, by relating mine; but I know your heart; the consolation you could give others, would be the greatest you could possibly receive.

Adieu, my dear and worthy friend! I expect your two answers with the greatest impatience.

Paris, Dec. 13, 17—.

L E T.

L E T T E R CLXXI.

*Madame de ROSEMONDE to the Che-
valier DANGENY.*

THE information you have given me, Sir, leaves me no room for any thing but sorrow and silence. One regrets to live, when they hear such horrible actions ; one must be ashamed of their sex, when they see a woman capable of such abominations.

I will willingly assist all in my power, Sir, as far as I am concerned, to bury in silence and forgetfulness every thing that could leave any trace or consequence to those melancholy events. I even wish they may never give you any other uneasiness than those inseparable from the unhappy advantage you gained over my nephew.

phew. Notwithstanding his faults, which I am forced to confess, I feel I shall never be consoled for his loss : but my everlasting affliction will be the only revenge I shall ever take on you ; I leave it to your own heart to value its extent.

Will you permit my age to make a reflection which seldom occurs to your's? which is, if rightly understood what is solid happiness, we should never seek it beyond the bounds prescribed by religion and the laws.

You may be very certain I will faithfully and willingly keep the deposit you have confided to me : but I must require of you to authorise me not to deliver it to any one, not even to yourself, Sir, unless it should be necessary for your justification. I dare believe you will not refuse me this request, and that it is now unnecessary to make you sensible we often

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figh for having given way to the most just revenge.

I have not yet done with my requisitions, persuaded as I am of your generosity and delicacy : it would be an act worthy both, to give me up also Mademoiselle de Volanges's letters, which you probably may have preserved, and which, no doubt, are no longer interesting. I know this young creature has used you badly ; but I do not think you mean to punish her ; and was it only out of respect to yourself, you will not debase an object you loved so much. I have, therefore, no occasion to add, the respect the girl is unworthy of, is well due to the mother, to that respectable woman, who may lay some claim to a reparation from you ; for, indeed, whatever colour one may seek to put on a pretended sentimental delicacy, he who first attempts to seduce a virtuous and innocent heart, by that measure

sure

sure becomes the first abettor of its corruption, and should be for ever accountable for the excesses and disorders that are the consequence.

Do not be surprised, Sir, at so much severity from me; it is the strongest proof I can give you of my perfect esteem. You will still acquire an additional right to it, if you acquiesce, as I wish, to the concealing a secret, the publication of which would prejudice yourself, and give a mortal stab to a maternal heart you have already wounded. In a word, Sir, I wish to render this service to my friend; and if I had the least apprehension you would refuse me this consolation, I would desire you to think first, it is the only one you had left me.

I have the honour to be, &c.

Castle of —,

Dec. 15, 17—.

L E T

L E T T E R CLXXII.

*Madame de ROSEMONDE to Madame
de VOLANGES.*

IF I had been obliged to send to Paris, my dear friend, and wait for an answer to the éclaircissements you require concerning Madame de Merteuil, it would not have been possible to give them to you yet; and even then they would be, doubtless, vague and uncertain: but I received some I did not expect, that I had not the least reason to expect, and they are indubitable. O, my dear friend! how greatly you have been deceived in this woman!

I have great reluctance to enter into the particulars of this heap of shocking abominations; but let what will
be.

be given out, be assured it will not exceed the truth. I think, my dear friend, you know me sufficiently to take my word, and that you will not require from me any proof. Let it suffice to tell you, there is a multitude of them, which I have now in my possession.

It is not without the greatest trouble I must also make you the same request, not to oblige me to give my motives for the advice you require concerning Mademoiselle de Volange. I intreat you not to oppose the vocation she shows.

Certainly, no reason whatever should authorise the forcing a person into that state, when there is no call : but it is sometimes a great happiness when there is ; and you see your daughter even tells you, if you knew her motives you would not disapprove them. He who inspires us with sentiments, knows better than our vain wisdom
can

can direct, what is suitable to every one; and what is often taken for an act of severity, is an act of his clemency.

Upon the whole, my advice, which I know will afflict you, for which reason you must believe I have reflected well on it, is, that you should leave Mademoiselle de Volanges in the convent, since it is her choice; and that you should rather encourage than counteract the project she has formed; and in expectation of its being put in execution, not to hesitate in breaking off the intended match.

Now that I have fulfilled those painful duties of friendship, and incapable as I am of adding any consolation, the only favour I have to request, my dear friend, is, not to put me any interrogatories on any subject relative to those melancholy events: let us leave them in the oblivion suitable to them; and without seeking useless
or

or afflicting knowledge, submit to the decrees of Providence, confiding in the wisdom of its views whenever it does not permit us to comprehend them. Adieu, my dear friend!

Castle of —,
Dec. 15, 17—.

L E T T E R . CLXXIII.

*Madame de VOLANGES, to Madame de
 ROSEMONDE.*

ALAS, my dear friend! with what a frightful veil do you cover the fate of my daughter; and seem to dread I should raise it! What can it hide, then, more afflicting to a mother's heart, than those horrible suspicions to which you give me up? The more I consider your friendship, your indulgence, the more my torments are increased.

increased. Twenty times since last night, I wanted to be rid of those cruel uncertainties, and to beg you would inform me, without reserve or evasion, and each time I shuddered, when I recollected your request not to be interrogated. At length, I have thought on a way which still gives me some hope ; and I expect from your friendship, you will not refuse to grant my wish : which is, to inform me if I have nearly understood what you might have to tell me ; not to be afraid to acquaint me with all a mother's tenderness can hide, and is not impossible to be repaired. If my miseries exceed those bounds, then I consent to leave the explanation to your silence : here is, then, what I already know, and so far my fears extended.

My daughter showed a liking for Chevalier Danceny, and I was informed, she went so far as to receive
letters

letters from him, and even to answer them ; but I thought I had prevented this juvenile error from having any dangerous consequence : now that I am in dread of every thing, I conceive it possible my vigilance may have been deceived, and I dread my daughter being seduced may have compleated the measure of her follies.

I now recall to mind several circumstances that may strengthen this apprehension. I wrote you, my daughter was taken ill, on the news of M. de Valmont's misfortune ; perhaps, the cause of this sensibility was the idea of the dangers M. Danceny was exposed to in this combat. Since when, she wept so much on hearing every thing was said of Madame de Merteuil ; perhaps, what I imagined the grief of friendship, was nothing else but the effect of jealousy, or regret at finding her lover faithless.

Her

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Her last step may, I think, perhaps be explained by the same motive. Some, who have been disgusted with mankind, have imagined they received a call from heaven. In short, supposing those things to be so, and that you are acquainted with them, you may, no doubt, have thought them sufficient to justify the rigorous advice you give me.

And if matters should be so, at the same time I should blame my daughter, I should think myself bound to attempt every method to save her from the torments and dangers of an illusory and transitory vocation. If M. Danceny is not totally divested of every honourable sentiment, he will not surely refuse to repair an injury of which he is the sole author ; and I also think, a marriage with my daughter, not to mention her family, would be advantageously flattering to him.

This, my dear and worthy friend, is my last hope ; hasten to confirm it, if possible. You may judge how impatient I shall be for an answer, and what a mortal blow your silence would give me.*

I was just closing my letter, when a man of my acquaintance came to see me, and related to me a cruel scene Madame de Merteuil had to go through yesterday. As I saw no one for some days, I heard nothing of this affair. I will recite it, as I had it from an eye witness.

Madame de Merteuil, at her return from the country on Thursday, was set down at the Italian comedy, where she had a box ; there she was alone ; and what must appear to her very extraordinary, not a man came near her during the whole performance. At coming away, she went, according to

* This letter remained unanswered.

custom,

custom, into the little saloon, which was full of company; instantly a buzzing began, of which probably she did not think herself the object. She observed an empty place on one of the seats, on which she sat down; but all the ladies who were seated on it immediately rose, as if in concert, and left her intirely alone. This so pointed mark of general indignation was applauded by all the men, redoubled the murmurs, which, it is said, were even at last increased to hootings.

That nothing should be wanting to compleat her humiliation, unfortunately for her, M. de Prevan, who had not appeared in public since his adventure, made his appearance at that instant. The moment he entered, every one, men and women, surrounded and applauded him; and he was jostled in such a manner, as to be brought directly opposite M. de Merteuil by the company who formed

a circle round him. It is asserted, she preserved the appearance of neither seeing or hearing any thing, and that she did not even change countenance ; but I am apt to believe this last an exaggeration. However, this truly ignominious situation lasted until her carriage was announced ; and at her departure, those scandalous hootings and hissings were again redoubled. It is shocking to be related to this woman. M. de Prevan received a most hearty welcome from all the officers of his corps who were there, and there is not the least doubt but he will be restored soon to his rank.

The same person who gave me this information told me M. de Merteuil was taken the night following with a very violent fever, that was at first imagined to be the effect of the dreadful situation she was in ; but last night the small pox declared itself, it is of
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the confluent kind, and of the worst sort. On my word, I think it would be the greatest happiness if it should carry her off. It is, moreover, reported, this affair will prejudice her most essentially in her depending lawsuit, which is soon to be brought to trial, and in which, it is said, she stood in need of powerful protection.

Adieu, my dear and worthy friend! In all this I see the hand of Providence punishing the wicked: but do not find any consolation for their unhappy victims.

Paris, Dec. 18, 17—.

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L E T T E R CLXXIV.

*The Chevalier DANCENY to Madame
de ROSEMONDE.*

YOU are very right, Madam ; most certainly I will not refuse you any thing that depends on me, and on which you are inclined to set a value. The packet I have the honour to send you, contains all Mademoiselle de Volanges' letters. If you will take the trouble to read them, you will be astonished to see so much candour united with such perfidiousness. This is, at least, what has made the strongest impression on my mind, at my last perusal of them.

But it is impossible to avoid being filled with the greatest indignation against M. de Merteuil, when one

recollects what horrible pleasure and pains she took to destroy so much innocence and candour.

No, Madam, I am no longer in love. I have not the least spark of a sentiment so unworthily betrayed ; and it is not love that puts me on means to justify Mademoiselle de Volanges. Still would not that innocent heart, that soft and easy temper, be moulded to good more readily than it was hurried to evil ? What young person, just come out of a convent, without experience, and almost divested of ideas, and bringing with her into the world, as most always happens, an equal share of ignorance of good and evil ; what young person could have resisted such culpable artifices more ? In order to inspire us with some indulgence, it is sufficient to reflect on how many circumstances, independent of us, is the frightful alternative

ternative from delicacy, to the depravity of sentiment. You, then, did me justice, Madam, in believing me incapable of having any idea of revenge, for the injuries I received from Mademoiselle de Volanges, and which, notwithstanding, I felt very sensibly. The sacrifice is great, in being obliged to give over loving her : but the attempt would be too great for me to hate her.

I had no need of reflection to wish every thing that concerns, or that could be prejudicial to her, should ever be kept secret from the world. If I have appeared something dilatory in fulfilling your wishes on this occasion, I believe I may tell you my motive ; I wished first to be certain I should not be troubled on my late unhappy affair. At a time when I was soliciting your indulgence, when I even dared to think I had some right to it, I should have dreaded having
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the least appearance in a manner of purchasing it by this condescension: certain of the purity of my motives, I had, I own, the vanity to wish you could not have the least doubt of them.

I hope you will pardon this delicacy, perhaps too susceptible, to the veneration with which you have inspired me, and to the great value of your esteem.

The same sentiment makes me request as a favour, you will be so obliging to let me know if you think I have fulfilled all the obligations the unhappy circumstances I was in required. Once satisfied on this point, my resolution is taken; I set out for Malta: there I shall with pleasure take and religiously keep vows which will separate me from a world, with which, though young, I have so much reason to be dissatisfied—I will endeavour in a foreign clime, to lose the idea of so
many

many accumulated horrors, whose remembrance can only bring sorrow to my head.

I am with the greatest respect,
Madam, &c.

L E T T E R CLXXV.

*Madame de VOLANGES to Madame
de ROSEMONDE.*

AT length, my dear and worthy friend, Madame de Merteuil's fate is determined; and it is such, that her greatest enemies are divided between the indignation she deserves, and the compassion she raises. I was right, when I wrote you it would be happy for her to have died of the small pox. She is recovered, it is true, but horribly disfigured; and has lost an eye. You may well imagine, I have not seen her; but I have been informed she is a hideous spectacle.

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The Marquis of ----- who never loses an opportunity of saying a sarcastical thing, speaking of her yesterday, said, that her disorder had turned her inside out; that now her mind was painted on her countenance. Unfortunately all present thought the remark very just.

Another event adds to her disgraces and her misfortunes: her lawsuit came to a trial the day before yesterday, and she was cast by the unanimous opinion of all the judges; costs of suit, damages, and interest.

All in favour of the minors: so that the little she had exclusive of this suit, is all swallowed, and more too by the expences.

As soon as she was informed of this news, although still ill, she set off post in the night alone — Her people say to-day, that not one of them would accompany her; it is imagined she has taken the road to Holland.

This

This sudden flight raises the general outcry more than all the rest; as she has carried off all her diamonds, which are a very considerable object; and were a part of her husband's succession; her plate, her jewels, in short every thing she could; and has left behind her debts to the amount of 50,000 livres — it is an actual bankruptcy.

The family are to assemble to-morrow to take some measures with the creditors. Although a very distant relation, I have offered to contribute, but I was not at this meeting, being obliged to assist at a more melancholy ceremony. To-morrow my daughter will put on the habit of novice; I hope you will not forget, my dear friend, my only motive in agreeing to this sacrifice, is the silence you keep with me.

M. Danceny quitted Paris about a fortnight ago; it is said he is gone to
Malta,

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Malta, to settle : perhaps it would be yet time enough to prevent him ? My dear friend, my daughter was very culpable then ! You will undoubtedly excuse a mother being difficult in acquiescing to such a dreadful truth.

What a fatality I am involved in for some time past, and has wounded me in my dearest connections ! My daughter and my friend.

Who can refrain being struck with horror at the misfortunes one dangerous connection may cause, and how many sorrows and troubles would be avoided by seriously reflecting on this point ! Where is the woman who would not fly the first advances of a seducer ? What mother would not tremble to see any other but herself speak to her daughter ? But those cool reflections never occur until after the event. And one of the most important and generally acknowledged truths, is stifled and

and useless in the vortex of our absurd manners.

Farewel, my dear and worthy friend! I now feel, our reason, which is inadequate to prevent misfortunes, is still less to administer consolation*.

Paris, Jan. 14, 17—

* Particular reasons and considerations, which we shall always think it our duty to respect, oblige us to stop here.

We cannot at this time give the reader neither the continuation of M. de Volanges' adventures, nor the sinister events which fulfilled the miseries or ended M. de Merteuil's Punishment.

We shall be permitted, perhaps, some time or other, to compleat this work, but we cannot pledge ourselves to this: even if we could, we should first think ourselves obliged to consult the taste of the public, who have not the same reasons we have to be concerned in this publication.

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F I N I S.